From: Bob McMurray
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 11/16/01 8:22am
Subject: Microsoft Case

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with the proposed penalties in the Microsoft Antitrust case. As a former computer support professional I feel I have a good amount of first-hand knowledge of their products. Of particular concern to me are two issues: bundling and windows source code.

Microsoft has made habit over the last two years of bundling more and more software with their operating system. This has the unfortunate consequence that consumers are not aware of the competitors for the Microsoft products (or their favored partners). Many users do not have the time to go out and research things like instant messengers, media players, and browsers. Therefore, they will just use what's given. On the other hand if they had to make a choice, they may not choose the Microsoft product--why not favor the outcome that gives us more choice, and puts control marketplace in the hands of the consumer rather than the supplier.

Another unfortunate cost of bundling is bloating. To run the latest version of Windows, Microsoft recommends that you have at least 128 megabytes of RAM, lots of diskspace and a pentium 3 processor. However, for most users (myself included) the range of things I want to do is fairly limited: browse the web, word processing, email. I could do all of those things just fine back when I had 16 megabytes of RAM, and a Pentium. Why do I need to upgrade my computer? Because microsoft has bundled so much into their software (in the way of applications like instant messengers, and pseudo applications like ActiveX) that it can't run on a small system any more. What's more most users are forced to upgrade because Microsoft no longer supports their older systems. It's like Ford saying they will no longer sell parts for cars built in the 80's--everyone should go out and buy 2001 models. This is a deceptive marketing practice, and requires user not only to buy more and more Microsoft products but to upgrade their computer constantly--just to keep doing the things they were doing all along. It also raises questions for many users as to whether there may be anticompetitive cooperation between Microsoft and Intel (the dominant chip maker), since people need to upgrade their CPU's every time a new operating system comes out.

The issue of windows source code has dramatically skewed the applications marketplace in favor of Microsoft. Since Microsoft has the source code for windows, it's applications can be written to take advantage of subtleties (and to avoid bugs) in the operating system. Other applications will not have this advantage. As a result, Microsoft's applications can be much more powerful and much more stable (not that they are) than others. To use the automotive analogy this would be like Ford refusing to tell Fram what

size oil filters to produce for Ford cars and trucks. This would of course make Ford's fit better and work more reliably.

Finally, right now Microsoft has an effective monopoly on operating system for the Intel platform. Because there is no set of standards for how operating systems and applications interact (Microsoft gets to make them up as they go along), there will never be a competitor (since it would not be compatible with existing Windows Applications). The creation of standards may seem a bit unnecessary, but look what it's done in the CPU industry. There are standards for how Windows interacts with processors and motherboards. As a result we have several CPU manufacturers (Intel, AMD, Cyrix, IBM) and lots of motherboards all of which are compatible with Windows. This has spurred innovation (and increased chip speed dramatically) and lowered prices. I would like to see something like this for Operating Systems and Applications. If there were standards then other companies could build operating systems for the Intel platform that would work with popular applications and be effective competitors to MS Windows. This would spur innovation, reduce prices and result in all sorts of favorable outcomes for consumers and the economy. Of course, requiring Microsoft to release their source code would be a step in the right direction--other programmers would be able to determine such a standard from the code.

Innovation in the operating system market is nonexistant. Most commentators agree that all of the versions of windows since 95 have simply been repairs of bugs that should have been fixed the first place. Windows 95 itself (from the users point of view) was just a rip off of Steve Jobs NeXT operating system and MacOS. Windows XP while looking quite different doesn't really do much more than the older versions--it just includes more bundled software. The bottom line is that by giving consumers choice and opening up competition, the marketplace will see more innovative products and have more choices. This will ultimately be good for the computer industry (when people are excited about it, they invest), and the products that come out of this will benefit the whole economy.

Don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions or would like further comment. You can reach me at 585-275-0751 or this email address.

Please reconsider the settlement you have proposed.

Bob McMurray